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LAND AND MACHINERY.

BY

LUCIEN SANIAL.

A LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE THE NEW YORK AMERICAN SECTION OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY.

(Reprinted from the "WORKMEN'S ADVOCATE.")

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(A Lecture delivered before the New York American Section of the Socialist Labor Party.)

The chief physical needs of man are three—food, shelter and raiment.

Of food we can to-day produce an unlimited supply; and, as we progress, facts not only disprove the Malthusian doctrine, that "population naturally tends to increase faster than the power to produce subsistence," but prove inversely that, taking the world as a whole, "the power to produce subsistence increases faster than population." There are, it is true, some countries of small extent, densely inhabited, where the soil, however productive, cannot be made to yield a sufficiency of food for its people. Such is Belgium, for instance, where the density of population has reached the apparently large figure of 485 to the square mile. But the existence of such countries, like that of large cities, is made possible by the mechanism of exchange, through which the surplus production of coal here, or of cloth there, is readily bartered for the surplus of food produced elsewhere. Therefore, these exceptions—more imaginary than real, since they exist on political lines only—confirm our proposition. Even in Great Britain, we are assured by the highest authorities that there is land enough to sustain all its population if applied to the production of food and cultivated to the height of its capacity. "But Great Britain," under capitalist management, "prefers to make cloth and build ships; to practise landscape gardening, and hold game preserves; to grow mutton in Australia; fence in the mountain parks of Colorado and Wyoming for beef production, and establish great granaries in Dakota."

As to raiment, in the present condition of manufacturing industry, the possibilities of production are not more limited than in the matter of food. The scarcity of raw material could alone curtail its supply. But what are the facts? Wool, flax, cotton and other textiles are grown in abundance, and their production might be multiplied indefinitely. Even to-day there is an enormous waste. As much flax as is

grown in Russia is burned on the ground in our Western States, where it is cultivated for the seed only. Our wool product increased sixfold in twenty-five years, and it is generally admitted that the repeal of the Custom's duty on foreign wool, by stimulating "to excess" its production in foreign countries, would very soon result in doubling that of Mexico, South America and Australia. From which it is seen that abundance, not scarcity, is deemed under our present system the danger of the time, even to the extent of preventing it by legislation.

As to shelter, its possibilities are more infinite still than those of food and raiment. There is room, to be sure, on this continent for one dwelling house to each family. The supply of wood is unlimited. Millions of acres of virgin forest are every year ruthlessly burned down by the pioneer. And where is the end of stone, or of clay, or of any material which enters into the construction of a building? In their transformation and transportation nothing is required but labor, the very surplus of which constitutes the problem of the age.

Why is it, then, that in such a world and at a time when human ingenuity has enslaved the forces of nature, men have to go hungry, ill-clad and homeless?

This question, we know, has become common-place from its frequency, and sounds declamatory to those who will not answer it. But millions of people are asking it to-day, and the thunder of discontent which fills the air cannot be mistaken for the ravings of demagogues.

"Why is it," asks the farm laborer, "that I, who can raise more wheat in a year than I can consume in my lifetime, am perforce without bread?" "Why is it," asks the factory operative, "that I, who can weave more cloth in a day than I can wear in years, am shivering in rags?" "Why is it," asks the mason, "that I, who can build palaces, have no roof over my head?"

away to individuals than to sell it, and that by granting the public domain to the landless of their time they were denying it to the landless of the future.

This Free Soil Party was short-lived, but its influence on the destinies of the country was incalculable. Of the three declarations just quoted the first led, nine years later, to the greatest civil war of modern times and the final abolition of chattel slavery; the second is a live issue of the present day; the third, with its unfortunate proviso, eventuated in the homestead law, which shows a conception of the right of man to land far more limited than that entertained by the Free Soilers.

In the first place, this law, intended on its face to give land in small quantities to the landless provided they should, by the improvement and use of it, benefit not themselves alone but the community at large, finally gives it to them absolutely and unconditionally. In the second place it ignored the cardinal principle of the Free Soilers, that the public lands should not be sold to individuals nor granted to corporations; it contains no provision against such special sales or grants.

The people, always short-sighted, could no more realize the immense value of their vast domain than imagine the possibility of its exhaustion. Capital, always far-sighted, immediately perceived its opportunity and determined to improve it.

And so it happened that in the ten years which followed the passage of the Homestead Law, only 220,000 people availed themselves of its provisions to the extent of 25,000,000 acres, whereas five corporations, by bribery on a scale of unprecedented magnitude in the history of nations, obtained free gifts from Congress to the amount of 181,000,000 acres.

In 1872 the national sentiment rebelled at last against the creation of corporate empires within the republic. A halt was called. Railway potentates must for a time be satisfied with the plunder they had heretofore secured. Its value was officially estimated in 1883 at the ridiculously small figure of \$391,000,000. Considering the rapid advance of land values along the subsidized lines, the discovery of untold mineral wealth throughout the vast domain alienated to them, the growth of cities on tracts which they own or control, it is safe to say that the actual value of the original grants, exclusive of improvements, will soon have to be computed in billions of dollars.

But capital, checked in one direction, started in another. The Homestead

Law was apparently intended to supplant the Pre-emption Act, which was never repealed. This, with the Desert Land Act and the Timber Culture Law, was found a most convenient instrument of land grabbing. In 1883 every acre of purely arable land, with the exception of a few undesirable tracts, had been monopolized by domestic and foreign speculators, while the commanding positions in the so-called "desert region" had also been secured by them. There they stand, like the robber barons of the middle ages, ready to swoop down upon what remains of our once "inexhaustible" public domain.

And they will soon get it. Then the landless, penniless also, driven from the field by the steam plow, driven from the factory by the labor-saving contrivances, driven from the roads and the streets by the shotgun and the baton, will find his lot a hard one indeed. He will much resemble the poor, degraded white people of the South that Fitzhugh, of Virginia—that bold leader of Southern thought—proposed to enslave for their own salvation. Then a modern philosopher, representing, like Fitzhugh, the "educated classes" of his time and country, will exclaim, as he did: "Slavery, black or white, is right and necessary. Two hundred years of liberty have made white laborers a pauper banditta. Free society has failed, and that which is not free must be substituted."

Aye, all that must come to pass, if we permit it.

Perchance, however, we may not permit it. Whatever legislators and officials may do under a government saturated with the corruption of our economic system; no matter how criminally they act in giving away public wealth and public franchises, or in administering public functions which have not yet passed into the hands of monopolists, the tendency of public opinion is already now sufficiently apparent. When the people will see clearly what is their own—and thousands see it today who will, I have no doubt, soon organize to demand it—then restitution shall have to be made.

Until then, of course, we must expect that the government in all its branches will be impregnated with the stench of bribery; that men, who can by their votes, transfer immense wealth and privileges from their rightful owners to rich thieves, will demand their share of the plunder; that other men, having in charge the administration of our executive departments, will for a similar consideration deliver what the first have voted away, and that, sinking to the

level of the surrounding immorality, a befouled bench will complacently whitewash all those turpitudes, and eagerly confirm all those spoliations!

But when it shall no longer be in the power of dishonest trustees to vote away and to deliver the otherwise undivided and indivisible right, title, and interest of each citizen in the public domain and public privileges, then will public morality rise to the level of surrounding economic conditions, resting upon the principle of equal rights and distributive justice.

Organization, then, is the chief question. And in this respect I may be permitted to quote what I said on another occasion:

"On every page of history stands out in blood-red letters the motto: Might is Right. At the head of every decree issued by a potentate, and of every law enacted by a class Parliament, those who see can read: Might is Right.

"Every class in turn must win its rights, and the poor, who are the many, come last, because might resides less in numbers than in organized intelligence.

"Therefore Right extends as Liberty expands. But he who wants rights must first have might, in which alone his freedom is safe. For what he cannot take he shall not obtain; what he cannot defend he shall not preserve.

"Workingmen, you know your wrongs. No one but you can right them. Let no question divide you. What to do and how to do it is of little moment while you can do nothing. First, be your own masters. Intelligence you have, and hearts, and knowledge enough to then make the world what it should be. Come together. Be one for all and all for one. Assert your power by organization. Take the ship of State. Hold it. Govern! That is to-day the only question."

This appeal I made in the *New York Leader* in 1887, when the single land tax fanatics, spurred on by corrupt and ambitious nonentities, were threatening to disrupt the United Labor Party. It expressed the honest, earnest wish of all men who held, as I do, that land and machinery cannot be considered separately in the economic problems of this age, and that the single land tax was not a solution. Comprehending the paramount value of organization, we then said to our deluded opponents among the workingmen: "Let us stand together. Let our common grievances make us one against the common enemy; and let us place our trust in the irresistible power of truth for the final victory of common sense over delusion."

But when the blind followers of George and their corrupt abettors had at last succeeded in disrupting the party, we spoke another language. With that same trust in the irresistible power of truth which had induced us to keep our fundamental beliefs in the background for the sake of organization, we then proclaimed them and carried them aloft in view of the reorganization to come. And it is again in view of this reorganization, the day of which is, I think, impending, that I here submit a few suggestions.

As I have already stated, thanks to the agitation of the past few years, it is now plainly seen by a majority of the disinherited, that "Land is of right the property of the people in common." The capitalist class alone affect to treat this proposition as an idle theory. But what is the fact? The total area of this country, exclusive of Alaska, is about two thousand million acres, of which twelve hundred million acres have been thus far appropriated in the proportion of one-half by farmers and one-half by land grabbers; leaving still a public domain of eight hundred million acres. Who can contest that this vast domain at least, even under our present system of capitalism, is of right, as it is in fact, the property of the people in common? Why not, then, reassert the three principles of the Free Soilers, slightly amended to meet the higher knowledge and plainer requirements of our time, as follows:

1. That the government has no more power to make a wage slave than to make a capitalistic king.

2. That, as the use of the soil is indispensable to life, the title of each citizen to an undivided and indivisible share in the soil of his country, proportioned to his labor, is as sacred as life itself.

3. That until such time as that portion of the national soil which has unduly become private property may be recovered to the nation by equitable means, the public domain at least shall not be sold to individuals nor granted to corporations, but shall be held as a sacred trust for the people, *to be worked by the people themselves, through their organized labor.*

Time is lacking to-night to develop this proposition fully. I may undertake to elaborate it on some evening in the early future if I find that it commends itself, *a priori*, to the minds of intelligent workingmen. I shall merely observe in conclusion:

1. That the working of the public domain by the people as a corporate body, through their organized labor and upon the plan, well known to you, of the Co-

operative Commonwealth, involves, as a matter of course, the nationalization on a gigantic scale, upon this public domain, of the machinery of production, transportation and distribution.

2. That it opens to the great army of the unemployed vistas of collective employment in striking contrast to their present prospect of constantly increasing idleness. While agriculture and mining, as the chief occupations in the early stage of settlement, would afford immediate relief to all the unskilled labor now out of work, numbers of skilled mechanics would at the same time be required to supply with shelter, raiment, tools, and other necessities, those engaged in the production of raw material. With the growth and diversification of industry, every branch of labor thoroughly organized would successively take its place in the new commonwealth. But, from the very beginning, carpenters, masons, painters, blacksmiths, wheel-

wrights, engineers, machinists, coopers, millers, bakers, tailors and shoemakers, are some of the trades for the services of which the demand would be such on the public domain as to compel a reduction of the hours of labor, higher pay and better treatment of wage-workers generally, in the States still subject to capitalist rule. That this rule would soon come to an end, I leave you to infer.

3. That for these reasons, and others not less obvious, a movement with such definite ends in view, sound in principle and clear to all, would greatly promote the organization of labor throughout the country, especially in that category of wage workers which organization has heretofore failed to reach.

Lastly, that by uniting labor as it never was united before—and this time against the wage system—it would at once force capital from the offensive to the defensive, and put its political machines in an unprecedented quandary.

SOME OF THE PUBLICATIONS WE RECOMMEND.

There are a number of books and publications which will assist the progressive citizen to become acquainted with socialistic ideas. Among them we recommend the following:

“LOOKING BACKWARD,” a novel. By Edward Bellamy. Published by Ticknor & Co., Boston. Price, 50c.

“THE CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH.” By Laurence Gronlund. Published by Lee & Shepard, Boston. Price, 30c.

THE WORKMEN'S ADVOCATE. Weekly paper. Official Socialist-Journal. Published by the National Executive Committee, 25 East Fourth street, New York. Price, \$1.00 per year, mailed to your address.

REPORTER AND SOCIALIST. By Alexander Jonas. Pamphlet. Published by New York Labor News Co., 25 East Fourth street, New York. Price, 10c.

CAPITAL. By Carl Marx. Over 800 pages. Authorized translation. Edited by Frederic Engels. Sold by New York Labor News Co., 25 East Fourth street, New York. Price, \$3.00.

All of the above publications may be had of the New York Labor News Co., 25 East Fourth street, New York. The News Co. also sends catalogues on application.

READ THE SOCIALIST PLATFORM.

Copies of the Platform sent to any address on application to the Secretary of the National Executive Committee, 25 East Fourth street, New York.